U.S. Doctor Says Cubans Seek Birth Control Pills

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WASHINGTON — With a "hideously high illegal abortion rate" and resulting deaths, Cuba wants to obtain U.S. birth control pills and contraceptive devices, an American doctor just back from a medical assembly in Havana reports.

Dr. Alan Guttmacher, national president of Planned Parenthood, returned last week from Havana where he was one of three physicians who addressed a meeting of the Cuban Medical Society.

He spoke to the Woman's National Democratic Club Monday before going to the State Department to make an official report on his 3-day visit.

Giving a world view of the population explosion, Guttmacher equated the threat of overpopulation with the nuclear threat and stressed that the problem is assuming such proportions that governments may have to act officially to limit families. "It may be taken out of the voluntary category," Dr. Guttmacher said.

Theproblem is not one of overpopulation, since Cuba needs workers, he explained. It is rather a problem of spacing. Women are bearing their children too close together, without an interval of two or three years between, he said.

Dr. Guttmacher said Cuba depends for its medical information, equipment and drugs on Russia, which does not manufacture either oral contraceptives or the little plastic loops, worn internally by women. The Soviets and satellites use legalized abortion to limit births.

Abortion, usually performed before the fetus is more than 12 weeks old, is working successfully also in Japan, where about a million legalized abortions are performed every year, but is "not likely to spread over much of the world," Dr. Guttmacher said.

He said sterilization is permitted by some nations "in desperation" after a woman has borne three or four children.

Dr. Guttmacher found the Cubans hungry for North American medical contact. He said that medicine has stood still since the revolution, with English and American textbooks unavailable and English language magazines filtering in irregularly.